



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Patria Mirabal

Middle School M324

**21 Jumel Place
Manhattan
NY 10032**

Principal: Janet Heller

**Date of review: March 13, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Cheryl McClendon**

The School Context

Patria Mirabal is a middle school with 471 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 85% Hispanic, 10% Black, 03% White, and 02% Asian students. The student body includes 34% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 94.9%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards	Celebration	Well Developed
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	Focus	Well Developed
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels	Additional Findings	Well Developed
School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	Additional Findings	Well Developed
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	Additional Findings	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and content standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks are refined through the analysis of student work and data to facilitate access and cognitive engagement.

Impact

The on-going development and refinement of Common Core-aligned curricula facilitates access, results in cognitive engagement and promotes college and career readiness for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teacher teams develop and continually revise curriculum maps and plans in all core subject areas that are aligned with the Common Core Learning standards and content standards. The math team integrated resources from the Connected Math Project 3 and Engage NY to write the math curriculum. The math curriculum is revised every June using data from unit assessments, interim assessments and summative assessments for the following year, as reported by the principal. The literacy curriculum, incorporating modified units from Teachers College Reading and Writing Project undergoes revisions each May for the following year. The principal states that individual units and lessons are continually revised throughout the year based on formative and summative assessments. The inquiry-based science curriculum integrates the New York State science standards and the Common Core reading and writing standards with a focus on informational texts and writing text-based arguments to justify scientific hypotheses. The social studies curriculum informed by the Common Core Learning Standards, the New York State Social Studies framework and the New York State Social Studies field guide incorporates disciplinary literacy tenets with a focus on the development of academic vocabulary.
- Curricular adjustments are the result of vertical planning and analysis. School-wide instructional and data analysis in social studies revealed that more than two years is required for full coverage of United States history. This year the social studies department revised the curriculum by truncating the sixth grade curriculum to primarily focus on geography and ancient civilization. This facilitates the introduction of United States history in the sixth grade. Similarly, eighth grade performance-based assessments in math reflected weaknesses in students' ability to effectively use flowcharts to solve algebraic equations. In order to scaffold student proficiency in this area, the math department incorporated the flowchart problem-solving method into sixth and seventh grade basic algebra units.
- Curricula tasks covering the same standards-based content are differentiated to facilitate access and understanding for English language learners and students with disabilities. For example, 7th grade samples of a statistics test reflect differentiated testing sheets. More space, fewer test items and more visual and procedural scaffolds are provided for students with disabilities and English language learners. In addition, in some cases challenging technical vocabulary words are substituted by more common moderate level vocabulary words.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms teaching strategies that reflect coherent beliefs about how students learn as informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts lay the foundation for high levels of student thinking, participation and ownership of learning.

Impact

These effective teaching strategies result in critical thinking, student participation and ownership of learning in all classes.

Supporting Evidence

- Purposeful use of high-level academic vocabulary was observed in the vast majority of classrooms as teachers held students accountable for providing text-based evidence for their claims and inferences. For example, in a 7th grade science class as students worked in groups to examine and classify different substances, they used and defined terms such as element, compound and mixture. Through experimentation, reference to the periodic table of elements and their research-based notes, group members were required to justify their classification for each substance.
- In almost all classrooms visited, teachers strategically grouped students for intellectual engagement in high-level discussions and rigorous collaborative work. For instance, in a sixth grade English language arts class student groups used a written response rubric to analyze and evaluate short responses to the Greek myth, "Cronus". Within more than one of the heterogeneous groups, students were observed taking ownership of the learning experience by clarifying information to enhance understanding for peers, as well as countering responses with which they did not agree. The teacher circulated amongst the groups to facilitate the discussions. While this high level of student-centered collaboration, with the teacher as facilitator was observed in the vast majority of classrooms, there were a couple of classrooms where student autonomy and ownership of learning was not as evident.
- In a sixth grade integrated co-teaching class, students worked on differentiated tasks during writing workshop. Students who struggled with getting their writing "off the ground" were guided through mentor texts by a teacher. Another group worked on revising their poetry drafts by adding imagery. The final group was guided through the revision strategy of adding line breaks to their drafts. Students took ownership of their work as they made decisions regarding the rhythm, meter and tone of their creative pieces.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Assessment practices across the vast majority of classrooms are aligned to the curricula and accurately capture student mastery that is tracked over time.

Impact

Comprehensive assessment practices capture a clear portrait of student mastery for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Assessments are written collaboratively by teachers guided by the coach or administrator. Common assessments are used by all teachers across grade level. Teacher created diagnostic, interim and predictive assessments based on CCLS and student data are used to inform instruction and curriculum plans. Diagnostics in literacy and math are given within the first three weeks of school. These are written based on the standards and skills student should have by the end of the previous year with changes in complexity of the text and the level of demand in what is asked of the students by each grade. The TC model is used for literacy running records. For mathematics, the assessments are comprised of the skills taught during the previous year that are required for mastery of the current grade's material. The Interim Assessment is aligned to standards taught in the first half of the school year. The Predictive is aligned to information gathered from previous year's state exams and the current standards.
- Teachers use exit slips, entrance slips, student class work, published work, weekly quizzes, unit tests, and student conferences to determine individual progress and needs. Rubrics and protocols written by teachers are used by students to know expectations for high level work. Assessments are written for each grade so teachers can analyze class and individual student progress.
- Frequent monitoring of student progress through review of student work and formative assessments is recorded in different forms including, Teacher Ease, a web-based gradebook communication software Math's Tracker, a web-based math diagnostic program, literacy writing task trackers and multiple choice reading skills trackers. Teachers are able to review data to know what key ideas were mastered, are approaching mastery or need to be retaught. Teacher teams review student work to determine next steps for planning, teaching and instruction. Teachers engage in data analysis based on assessments, which informs intervention.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations aligned with the Danielson Framework for Teaching and provide supports for teachers in meeting those expectations. Teacher teams and other staff establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations and provides embedded supports to ensure that all students own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level.

Impact

The strong supports provided by the school leader through differentiated professional development allow the realization of these high expectations. The school's established systems and structures result in students ready for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- The faculty handbook outlines expectations for classroom instruction and behavioral expectations. School leaders review this manual with the entire faculty in September during the first two days of school. In addition, administrators and teachers discuss high expectations during the initial individual planning conferences. School leaders conduct observations followed by post-observation meetings and provide specific feedback with the stated expectation that the feedback will be put into action and observed during follow up observations.
- Professional development meetings by department and grade are built into the teachers' schedules. Research-based professional development is facilitated by instructional coaches and organizations. Math teachers are supported by Math in the City Science teachers receive support from the National Writing Project. Teachers attend PD opportunities through the New York Historical Society. The Institute for Learning provides professional development focused on lesson planning structures. In addition, the school sponsors teachers in attending national education conferences.
- Systems and structures are embedded into the school culture that makes clear to students high expectations while they attend MS 324 and when they advance to high school.. For example, the school's chant, "You're not born smart, you get smart. You get smart by working hard." is one strategy used to change the mind set of students' concept of how success is achieved.
- Students are able to see their progress using Teacher Ease, feedback from teachers, and unit-based reflection tools.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based professional collaborations that have strengthened teacher instructional capacity and increased student achievement for all learners. Through these teams, leadership is distributed as teachers have an integral role in instructional decision-making as well as in decisions that support school-wide initiatives.

Impact

Teacher team work and distributed leadership structures promote student achievement and school wide initiatives.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams analyze formative and summative data on an on-going basis. Teachers compare student work against normed references such as Common Core Learning Standards, rubrics for tasks and materials from Engage New York.
- The special education team is engaged in inquiry-driven teamwork using the research of Joseph Murphy, *Creating Productive Cultures in Schools for Students Teachers, and Parents*, to assess the academic and social emotional supports needed to meet the needs of the school's most struggling students. Teachers conduct individual research on topics specific to students who are struggling based on data from interim assessments. Inquiry projects on topics such as teaching readers with dyslexia, tools for students with ADHD, and supporting students with disabilities in the mainstream classroom are aligned to each focal student's needs. These research projects will be used to build school wide capacity in working with students with disabilities.
- Teachers take on leadership roles to promote teacher learning or supports for students. A teacher leader attended conferences and webinars on Danielson. He then facilitated a series of workshops for teachers resulting in a Danielson Framework document written in user-friendly language with examples of evidence for each domain and component. Two teacher leaders introduced the Restorative Justice program to the faculty by procuring professional development services from the Teachers Unite organization. A group of teachers and the guidance counselor are attending a six-session PD on Saturdays to learn the Life Space Crisis Intervention method as a part of the school's restorative justice work. Another teacher collaborated with Columbia University to bring undergraduate math students to serve as 1:1 tutors for a Saturday math program. This same teacher initiated Debate Club which has been expanded to include another teacher. Math teachers initiated the school's work around the number strings math conceptual understanding building program. Literacy teachers initiated a school wide Readathon. And yet another teacher wrote a grant proposal that resulted in teachers and students participating in a project spearheaded by the Center for Environmental Research and Conservation at Columbia University.